

**CITY OF FITCHBURG
WATER / WASTEWATER COMMISSION**

COMMISSION MINUTES

March 13, 2013

The City of Fitchburg Water / Wastewater Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on March 13, 2013 at the JA Provincial Building located at 1200 Rindge Rd, Fitchburg, MA.

The meeting commenced at 4:45 p.m.

Members present: George Siener
 Lenny Laakso, Commissioner DPW
 Rick Healey
 Carol Brown
 Ronald Lubianez
 Michael McLaughlin

Members Absent: none

Others present: Dave Clark, City Councilor
 Denis Meunier, Deputy Commissioner Water
 Joseph Jordan, Deputy Commissioner W.W.
 Mary Jane Franklin, Clerk

ITEM # 1: Approval of last meetings minutes:

The minutes for the February 13, 2013 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

ITEM # 2: Public Forum:

No one from the public attended.

ITEM # 3: Discussion of future Enterprise Fund funding costs for retiree health and life insurance:

Mr. Meunier presented the Commission information on estimated annual costs that the Enterprise Funds may incur related to the funding of current and future costs for retiree's health and life insurance.

The City is presently developing costs estimates based on an actuarial evaluation done Stone Consulting Inc. of Medfield, MA to comply with recent changes in accounting standards that address the requirement that Municipalities fund present and estimated future cost of retiree health and life insurance. The evaluation estimates presented in the report are as of January 1, 2011. Based on an evaluation of current retiree obligations and calculated future retirees the unfunded liability for the entire City is estimated at \$183,129,244 the estimated portion of that liability currently attributed to the Wastewater Enterprise Fund is \$5,584,228 and the Water Enterprise Fund is \$4,370,032. The report also provides recommended funding schedules for consideration. The Mayor and the City Financial Team are in the process of evaluating the best way to move forward on the process of developing a schedule that would allow the City to comply with the standard. Depending on the annual contribution that the City makes towards reducing this liability will help to determine the annual cost incurred by the Enterprise Funds. It

was noted that this issue is not unique to Fitchburg and is now being considered and discussed by many municipalities.

The Commission asked several questions concerning the way that the Enterprise Fund liability was calculated and which employees both past and present are included in the calculation. These questions will be presented to the City Treasurer and Auditor for clarification. The Commission asked to be kept informed as this matter is evaluated further by the City.

ITEM # 4: General Update:

Ongoing Projects:

Mr. Jordan reported that work will be resuming on separation project CSS3C on April 1. Pipe lining has taken place throughout March.

CSS4D which is the Boutelle St and John Fitch Hwy area is on schedule. CSS4D will be going to bid in early April and should meet the June 30 deadline to award the contract. Construction is expected to start in August or early September.

The CEPT project is going well. New chemicals have started this week. The dosages are still being adjusted and there have been minor problems with some of the equipment that has been installed. This project is expected to be completed within the next few months, ahead of schedule and on budget.

The loan appropriation for the upgrades at the East Plant was approved by the Commission and passed by Council. An amendment is being prepared for Wright Pierce to begin the design on the final phase of this project.

Mr. Jordan reiterated that at the completion of the current and next separation projects and that once the East Plant upgrades are completed there is a very real possibility that the City would be able to avoid future major construction projects. All work covered by the consent decree was estimated at \$100M. Mr. Jordan hopes to save \$40M - \$50M in consent decree costs, or at least minimize the work, as the EPA has agreed to allow Fitchburg to complete a Wastewater Management Plan to demonstrate that water quality in the Nashua is meeting the required goals. At that point the City would be allowed to make an appeal that the intent of the decree has been met.

MassCEC grant award – anaerobic Digestion:

Mr. Jordan received notice from MassCEC that Fitchburg was approved for a \$60,000 grant to perform a feasibility study on the possibility of constructing anaerobic digesters at the West Wastewater Treatment Facility. The West Plant would be retrofitted with anaerobic digesters which potentially would provide a long term solution to treating Fitchburg sludge and would also allow the treatment of outside sludge as a revenue source. One of the major advantages of the digestion process is that it generates methane gas as a byproduct that can be used as an energy source for heat or generating electricity. Weston and Sampson prepared the grant and will also be doing the study.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The next meeting is scheduled for April 10, 2013 at 4:30 pm at the Water Office.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Minutes Prepared by: _____

Mary Jane Franklin

Senior Clerk